



March 2008

East Coast Greenway



*Closing the Gaps in our Southeast Region:
Georgia and Florida*

This report outlines the East Coast Greenway Alliance's:

- Vision and goals for the Greenway
- Value added to local trail efforts
- Recent progress in the Southeast region
- Strategy for Closing the Gaps in the Southeast region



Vision and Goals

The East Coast Greenway is a multi-use pathway for traffic-free travel connecting major cities along the eastern seaboard between Canada and Key West. The East Coast Greenway Alliance (ECGA) is mobilizing resources to link existing trails and developing new trails to fill the gaps to form this “Urban Appalachian Trail.” The Greenway is 20% complete today, with another 20% in development.

Over the past year we completed an important “Close the Gaps Campaign” goal – the identification and mapping of a complete on and off-road Travel Route for the entire corridor. Google maps and cue sheets for this route are being posted on our web site.

Remaining goals of our “**Close the Gaps Campaign**” are, by the end of 2010, to:

- Double the miles of Greenway that are on safe trail and achieve 80% off-road in our major population centers.
- Make interim on-road sections more bicycle-pedestrian friendly with striped bike lanes or wider shoulders and sidewalks and safer intersections.
- Establish at least one 100-mile ‘model’ trail section with signs, maps and amenities
- Post our trail markers and more informational kiosks along the route
- Produce Trail User Guides (like our new NJ Guide) for all 16 states
- Begin a partnership with tour operators to run tours along our route

Value added to local trail efforts

While aiming to create a long-distance tourism route, the Greenway brings much value to the local trail efforts along its corridor:

- ***A compelling larger trail vision:*** The East Coast Greenway vision for a long-distance route is especially compelling. While relatively few will travel its full length, the idea that one can go, without the benefit of a motor, from a local trail to Key West or to Canada—or just to the next town or city—has a romantic thrill for many people.
- ***Raising the profile and official support for local trails:*** Making local trails part of this bigger vision raises the priority of local trails along our route at the local, county and state levels and helps them gain greater official support and funding.
- ***Adding ECGA organization support:*** We add the strength of our own organization—staff and volunteers—to local trail efforts. We mobilize, coordinate and focus local citizens and agencies on the larger goal of a linked, interstate Greenway. For example, at statewide Greenway summits in each state this fall (or next spring), all stakeholders will assemble to coordinate a strategy.
- ***Providing consistent travel guidance to users:*** By providing signage, maps and cue sheets to Greenway users, ECGA will help to make visiting tourists and locals aware of not only the Greenway, but also the local constituent trails.
- ***Contributing to local economies:*** We will increase tourism in local communities through our marketing of the trail system, which will benefit businesses such as B&B's, bike shops, food stores and restaurants.

Progress in the Southeast Region

- **28% (213 miles) of the 750-mile route through the 2-state Southeast region is complete as traffic-free trail.** (Attached is a list of all completed Southeast ECG trails.)
- **We've mapped our Travel Route from Savannah to Key West,** field-checked our cue sheets, and posted both to our website, which are now available to all free. Experienced cyclists may now explore the entire route.
- **A water taxi is in development to link St. Marys, Georgia, and Fernandina Beach,** Florida, potentially eliminating a much longer, dangerous, and less scenic bi-state route.
- **Publication this spring of the first guide to the Greenway in Florida** for the “First Coast” counties of Nassau, Duval (City of Jacksonville), and St. Johns. It will highlight nature, history and culture along the route.
- **Recent completion of the South Miami-Dade Busway path** connects this 22.3-mile trail with the M-Path under the Metrorail alignment, creating a continuous off-road route through the southern half of Dade County, Florida's most populous metropolis.
- **In Monroe County (the Keys) work is underway to upgrade and fill-in missing pieces of a continuous 106-mile traffic-free route,** including reconnecting many bridges. This is one of the most sought-after cycling routes along the entire Greenway route.
- ***We built the foundation for future trail progress in the Southeast:***

- Through meetings held in March 2007 in the three northern First Coast counties we've developed a momentum that has led to creation of a Trails Coalition in the Jacksonville area and a variety of projects aimed at moving the Greenway ahead
- Four days of (sometimes mobile) meetings last summer in the five counties from Miami-Dade north through Martin has led to another broad collaboration among private and government planners and advocates, that has helped to refine our route and get it onto the agendas of key officials.
- A third initiative in the five-county central coastal region has led to the launching of a new 200-mile trail project dubbed the St. Johns River-to-the-Sea Loop which has brought together key officials in support and will provide a route for the Greenway through this region.

But, significant challenges remain:

- *A safe route including a change in existing roadway regulations* needs to be found to get the Greenway between Titusville at mainland Brevard County to the barrier island at Port Canaveral.
- *42% (63 miles) through Georgia needs to have off-road routing defined*
- *Parts of the Gold Coast need gaps closed* – 12.5 miles in Palm Beach, Broward and Miami-Dade counties
- *An improved road connection between Miami-Dade and the Keys* is underway but without accounting for trail. This needs to be dealt with before final decisions are taken.

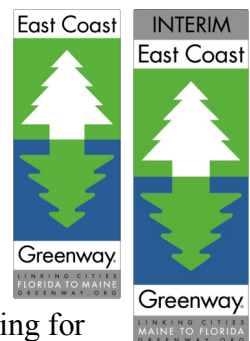
Our three-part strategy for Closing the Gaps in the Southeast

1. Promote Greenway use to build momentum

Encourage use of the *Travel Route*. Our route uses the safest on-road routing we could find to link completed trail sections. We have put this route on Google maps and cue sheets (turn by turn directions), which can be downloaded from www.greenway.org.

Post Signage. To facilitate public awareness and use of the East Coast Greenway we will press ahead with **posting signs along our route**. Trail markers like these will be placed along both the completed trail and interim on-road route. We are working with the public agencies that manage the route to accomplish this.

Develop User Maps and Guides. We'd like to replicate our recently published Trail User Guide for New Jersey (order one at www.greenway.org) in Georgia and Florida, and are working to secure funding for production. These guides provide another key to getting more people out using the



Greenway. We will also be working up short guides to “model” sections of our route where most of the trail is complete, aimed at day or weekend excursions by families. Potential model sections in Southeast include the route through the Keys. In spring 2008, the Alliance will publish its first Florida regional brochure/guide to the Greenway, funded by county tourism agencies and by Visit Florida.

Continue to Build Awareness. East Coast Greenway recognition is growing. With increasing public awareness of the Greenway, more people are asking their local and state elected officials and staff to help make it happen.

We are overhauling our web site this spring and putting much more information on it for people wanting to explore the Greenway. The website should launch in late spring.

Thanks to support from REI, we are launching an Ambassador Corps in New England to broadly increase awareness of the Greenway. A select group of 24 Ambassadors are being trained this spring and outfitted with materials to hand out or display at area festivals and events and through “on the trail” communication. We’d like to expand this to our other regions next year.

2. Put more Greenway on the ground

Immediate priorities in Georgia include:

- Work with GDOT to ensure first class bicycle-pedestrian accommodation in the design of the new **Back River Bridge**, between South Carolina and Hutchinson Island.
- Include the East Coast Greenway in local projects such as: development of **Savannah’s Battlefield Park** between the Visitor Center and Louisville Road; creation of a wetlands mitigation bank along the Ogeechee River in Chatham County; and the Safe Routes to School funded extension of the **JF Gregory Park Trail** in the city of Richmond Hill along the Ogeechee River.
- Support Liberty County’s efforts to advance a **trailhead at Riceboro Creek**, including parking, picnic shelters, and a bridge; and secure funding to construct a **trail for the LeConte-Woodmanston Plantation** as part of the Gullah-Geechee National Heritage corridor.
- Begin construction on the seven-mile **Highlander Trail** along SR 99 in McIntosh County.

Immediate priorities in Florida include:

- In Fernandina Beach, address Coast Guard requirements relative to the proposed start of the **St. Marys River Taxi**.
- Support work toward completing a **five-mile loop trail around downtown Jacksonville** that will become part of the Greenway.
- Continue leadership of the myriad partners in support of the central Florida **St. Johns River-to-the-Sea Loop** to secure funding and construction by 2013.

- Work with Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council to help organize design and construction of the Greenway through the city of Fort Pierce in St. Lucie County, through middle Martin County, through Jonathan Dickinson State Park (Martin and Palm Beach counties), and through the rest of Palm Beach County.

3. Build ECGA capacity to make the East Coast Greenway happen

Advancing the Greenway in our Southeast region will require the efforts and participation of many public and private partners at the local, county, state and federal levels.

One paid staff person and four volunteer leaders coordinate the Alliance efforts in 19 counties of Georgia and Florida. Our State volunteers are greatly empowered by having staff support located in the region. Bringing professional staff to the state and local efforts has enabled the ECGA and our many partners and volunteers to have a stronger presence and voice.

We are fortunate to have Herb Hiller as our Southeast Regional Coordinator since mid-2006. **But we will need funds to keep Herb on board into the future.** Additional funds would allow us to add another part-time staff person to assist him.

Local enthusiasm is making the Greenway happen!

Thousands of people in this continually more urbanized region already walk or cycle for short-distance commutes, other utilitarian trips and for recreation and exercise. They constitute the core of a committed advocacy group for greenways. Our ECGA state committees have forged strong relationships with state transportation and environmental agencies and officials from the municipalities along the route.

We also benefit from active bicycle and hiking clubs who advocate for trails and greenways in their areas and from individuals who are expert in greenway issues and determined to move the Greenway forward.

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COMPLETED ECG TRAILS IN THE SOUTHEAST

Georgia

- **Savannah River Water Taxi**, Savannah, 0.2 mi
- **River Street**, Savannah, 0.7 mi
- **Rice Dikes**, Richmond Hill. 1.0 mi
- **Woodbine Trail**, 1.1 mi

Florida

- **Amelia Island Parkway**, Fernandina Beach, 1.9 m
- **Talbot Islands State Park**, Jacksonville, 3.6 mi
- **St. Johns River Ferry**, Jacksonville, 1.5 mi
- **Ponte Vedra Sidepath**, Ponte Vedra Beach, 5.2 m
- **River to the Sea Trail**, Flagler County, 26.4 mi
- **Halifax River Trail**, Ormond Beach and Holly Hill, 2.9 mi
- **Ponce de Leon Inlet Water Taxi**, Ponce Inlet-to-New Smyrna Beach, 1.5 mi
- **Highway A1A Sidepath**, South Brevard County, 38.4 m
- **Highway A1A Trail**, Indian River county, 22.4 mi
- **Green River Parkway Trail**, Martin County, 3.9 mi
- **Jupiter Riverwalk**, Jupiter, 3.8 mi
- **Flagler Drive Trail**, West Palm Beach, 4.2 mi
- **South Palm Beach Trail**, Palm Beach, 5.8 mi
- **Highway A1A Trail**, Boca Raton, 3 mi
- **Hollywood Broadwalk**, Hollywood, 2.1 mi
- **Lincoln Road**, Miami Beach. 5.5 mi
- **Miami River Greenway**, Miami, .35 m
- **M-Path and South Miami-Dade Busway**, Miami-Dade County, 22.3 mi
- **Overseas Heritage Trail**, various sections through the Florida Keys, 46.9 mi